

epicenter



VA Honors Eye Researchers with **OLIN TEAGUE** AWARD

no. 4

inside
this
edition

director's message **2** | vapahcs news **3** | making way—new aquatic therapy center **4**
hispanic heritage month **5** | stand down **6** | cover story—olin teague award **8**
recognizing dr. trisha suppes **9** | va news **10** | employee news **11** | feedback **12**

As we close another productive fiscal year and prepare

for the challenges ahead, we should reflect on the many accomplishments you have produced in Fiscal Year 2009. VA Palo Alto Health Care System (VAPAHCS) had another stellar year of results in our clinical and financial measures. We will have the full results listing in time for our town hall meetings later this fall. With the chartering of our new Performance Excellence Council, we are fine tuning our approach to some of the more challenging measures. We have also increased communication between VAPAHCS and VA Central Office on changing those measures that merit revision. I want to thank all of our performance champions who have so assiduously led the charge on meeting these measures and monitors. Secretary Shinseki plans to dramatically increase the visibility of VHA's performance results in 2010; we welcome this increased transparency in our terrific performance.



*We will
launch
our revised
VAPAHCS
Strategic Plan
in the fall
of 2009*

Another new council we launched in 2009 was our Strategic Planning Council. In addition to the weekly meetings of the council, our top leadership engages in bi-monthly mini retreats to advance our strategic planning efforts in this time of rapid change in our physical environment and with the fiscal and clinical challenges we face. We will launch our revised VAPAHCS Strategic Plan in the fall of 2009. This plan will go beyond mandated performance and other routine inspections and accreditations. It will position us to lead VHA in continuous performance improvement with VAPAHCS-led initiatives in quality, cost effectiveness and innovation. Please continue reading our VAPAHCS News and Notes briefings regarding these and other new initiatives such as our soon to be launched Veteran and Family Advisory Council. This Council will ensure we systematically receive unfiltered, productive feedback from Veterans and family members on new initiatives, changes in services and areas requiring improvement.

Fiscal Year 2010 promises to be full of activity given this is the year of many of our three year accreditation/inspection cycles. We have had and will continue to sponsor numerous forums on our ongoing readiness activities for The Joint Commission (TJC) survey. We are currently within our survey "window"; our last triennial survey occurred in March 2007.

Please visit Vapaweb to view the compendium of preparation materials from Quality Management. Later in 2010 we will have our next OIG Combined Assessment Program Review. We are also preparing for various Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF) surveys, some of which will be first-time surveys. Certainly survey readiness is part of our everyday business now more than ever as more survey agencies move to unscheduled versus scheduled surveys.

Finally, I ask for your continued patience with the construction that has begun and will continue on the Palo Alto campus for the next several years. You have shown wonderful patience with the new restrictions in flow on the Loop road, and I ask for your continued patience when we move to off-site parking in the next few months—a radical change for many of you. Please watch for the many opportunities we will offer you to revisit your longstanding commuting/parking habits. We appreciate your cooperation as we keep parking available to Veterans and their families. As always, I am extremely grateful for all your support and your dedication to our Nation's Veterans.

Lisa Freeman
Director

Bay Area Team Wins National Award for Innovative Way to Help Injured Veterans and Their Families

A team of Silicon Valley volunteers received the 2009 Newman's Own Award for creating an innovative new way for injured military service members and service-connected Veterans to get assistance. USA Together began working with VA Palo Alto Health Care System two years ago and was presented the award at the Pentagon on Sept. 10 by Admiral Mike Mullen, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and Tom Indoe, President of Newman's Own, the foods company started by actor Paul Newman.



Dave Mahler, who started USA Together two years ago, meets with his staff who manage the site, Marsha Duro and Eric Bergan.

USA Together is a web site (www.usatogether.org) where injured service members or service-connected Veterans and their families can post requests for basic unmet needs, including goods (such as a washer or baby crib), services (like legal assistance or construction help) and modest financial assistance. Then

individuals and community groups and businesses that subscribe to USA Together get notified via e-mail of the needs and can reach out to offer help.

"It's like a special form of Craig's List focused on helping our recovering service members," said Dave Mahler, CEO of USA Together. "We knew that many Americans wanted to help, but just didn't know how. This web site lets them read the stories of those injured and find someone they can connect with to help—either right in their own community or across the nation."

USA Together began when the founders approached Kerri Childress, VAPAHCS communications officer, and asked about the challenges families face as they recover from service-connected injuries. The team is made up of Bay Area high tech professionals who mostly have no prior military background. USA Together also assists the immediate families of those service members who died as a result of their service.

One hundred percent of any money donated towards meeting service member requests goes to meet those needs. USA Together is a registered 501c3 non-profit corporation. Newman's Own, Fisher House Foundation and Military Times Media Group sponsored the competition, which seeks to reward ingenuity and innovation for programs that benefit service men and women and their families.

A total of 112 entries were submitted for the award and 11 organizations were recognized with USA Together winning the top award. The Fisher House Foundation coordinates the competition and hosted the awards ceremony along with Military Times Media Group and Newman's Own. ▲

USA Together, Inc

171 Main Street, #106

Los Altos, CA 94022

Info@USAtogether.org

www.USAtogether.org

Fax: 650-227-3800



Polytrauma System of Care programs participate in Team Building Day

Members of the Polytrauma System of Care programs participated in a Team Building day on August 19, 2009. The event provided relaxing, fun, team-building exercises, which strengthened the entire program and boosted morale. Types of activities included a potluck, group picture and tug-of-war competition between Polytrauma programs (PRC/CRC vs. PTRP vs. PNS vs. PSC Admin & OEF/OIF Program).



Making Way for Our New Aquatic Center at PAD

VAPAHCS was fortunate to be selected to construct a new Aquatic Therapy Center, which will house both warm water aquatic therapy for patient rehabilitation and a lane lap pool for patients who wish to exercise.

The former pool and gymnasium (Building 23) was constructed in 1959 and had some structural and functional deficiencies. The new aquatic therapy center will open in approximately two years and will be located adjacent to a new Polytrauma and Blind Rehabilitation Center. ▲



VAPAHCS Building 23 (Gym) is razed.

Construction Updates with a Click

Learn about what's happening, what's going to happen and how it may benefit you—you can access the new Construction Web Site from VAPAHCS' internal and external homepages.

Check It Out:

<http://www.palo-alto.med.va.gov/construction.asp>



VAPAHCS Celebrates Hispanic Heritage Month

Embracing the Fierce Urgency of Now!

HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH recognizes the contributions Hispanic Americans have made to the United States and celebrates Hispanic heritage and culture. Each year Americans observe National Hispanic Heritage Month from September 15 to October 15, by celebrating the histories, cultures and contributions of American citizens whose ancestors came from Spain, Mexico, the Caribbean and Central and South America.

The observance was initiated by President Lyndon B. Johnson in 1968 as Hispanic Heritage Week, but was lengthened by President Ronald Reagan in 1988 to cover a 30-day period.

Hispanic Americans have played an important role in shaping America, our communities and our military forces. The influence of the Hispanic culture is reflected in everyday America, in the arts, music, architecture, science, food, professional sports and the media. Hispanic Americans serve as leaders and at the forefront of public service/ government, law, business, science, sports, arts, and in every U.S. military branch. Hispanic Americans have also proudly served our country in every war since the founding of our nation, and 43 have earned the Congressional Medal of Honor.

This year's theme for Hispanic Heritage Month is "Embracing the Fierce Urgency of Now," submitted by Jorge Ponce, Director of the Policy and Evaluation Division at the office of Civil Rights in the U.S. Department of Commerce. His winning theme phrase was actually used once before by the great Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in his landmark "I have a dream" speech.

If you would like more information about Hispanic Heritage Month events, or if you would like to assist the committee, please contact Thomas M. Turrey III at ext. 67016 or via e-mail at thomas.turrey@va.gov. ▲



NATIONAL HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH
Embracing the Fierce Urgency of Now!
 September 15 - October 15

THE HISPANIC HERITAGE COMMITTEE & EEO OFFICE PRESENT "THE LEGACY OF VALOR"
VAPAHCS PAD AUDITORIUM BUILDING 101

Thursday, October 8, 2009

Display & Movie Viewing | 8AM-11AM

ANNUAL HISPANIC HERITAGE FIESTA | 12:30PM-1:30PM

Display & Movie Viewing | 2PM-5PM

Friday, October 9, 2009

Display & Movie Viewing | 8AM-5PM

Medal of Honor Bestowed on members

of the United States Armed Forces who distinguished themselves "conspicuously by gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of their own life and beyond the call of duty while engaged in an action against an enemy of the United States." Due to the nature of its criteria, the medal is often awarded posthumously.

MOVIES: *The Aztec Eagles Last Flight*
Justice for my People—the Dr. Garcia Story
East L.A. Marine

To read stories from the Library of Congress Veterans War History Project, *Experiencing War: Hispanics in Service* please visit <http://www.loc.gov/vets/stories/ex-war-hispanicveterans.html>

I am also a veteran; I had my share of challenges, but now I'm not only in a new chapter of my life, I'm in a completely different book...

—Bill Meyers, VA Recreational Therapy Assistant



VAPAHCS

Stand Down

by Michael Hill-Jackson

Provides Respite and Help For

VAPAHCS Director, Lisa Freeman and keynote speaker, Santa Clara Superior Court Judge Stephen Manley who spoke with homeless veterans about his Veterans' court. ▼



The Stand Down was a truly amazing experience!

—Karen Chwick, VA Volunteer

Redwood trees and smiling faces can take you away from most of the problems in your life, especially when those smiling faces are there to help you. This was the scene at the South Bay Stand Down on Sept. 18-21, 2009, at the Boulder Creek Scout Reservation site, where more than 200 volunteers from VAPAHCS showed up to provide care for homeless veterans.

More than 150 homeless vets were shuttled from South Bay streets and parks to receive a variety of care including dental and medical care, as well as court and DMV services. One happy vet boasted an elimination of \$11,000 in court fines, which he worked off helping to prepare food and assisting in the kitchen.

Kate Severin, Outreach Coordinator at VAPAHCS and Chair of the Stand Down, spent nearly a year planning the event. This is the second South Bay Stand Down since 2007 headed by Severin who says, "We want to create a connection to a time in their life when they were thriving. It's not just the will to change but the support."

Support is exactly what they received, as volunteers darted around making sure each veteran was comfortable and seen by each service.

Sonia Smith, a veteran who was also a volunteer, knows the importance of the support given at events like this. In 2007, Smith was a participant and received legal services, reducing her fines to four hours of community service. Taking for granted the opportunity, she left that year's Stand Down before completing her hours, earning her an additional 100 hours of community service.

This wakeup call helped her realize where she needed to be. After going through the Homeless Veteran Rehabilitation Program (HVRP), she was introduced to Project Hire, which helped her get hired as a VA employee.

"My dream was to work for the program and help other people who were like me," says Smith, who now works

10.) His court is one of fifteen in the nation that helps those who have served our country get proper legal services and treatment to fight addictions.

Another highlight of the ceremony was a lottery of five participants who received housing vouchers from the VA Palo Alto Homeless programs. These recipients will be setup with their own home during their path to recovery.

Other speakers included Lisa Freeman, VAPAHCS Director, Sonia Smith and Daniel Johnson who gave accounts of their journeys as homeless veterans



▲ Sonia Smith, a Veteran, once a Stand Down participant herself, volunteering with her husband Army Veteran, Kevin Smith.

South Bay Homeless Veterans

for HVRP in Menlo Park.

A VA recreational therapist assistant, Bill Meyers, has a similar story. He went through VA programs such as First Step and HVRP, eventually being hired with VA as a permanent employee.

*It's not just
the will to change
but the support.*

—Kate Severin,

Outreach Coordinator, VAPAHCS

"I am also a Veteran; I had my share of challenges, but now I'm not only in a new chapter of my life, I'm in a completely different book, so I just want to give back to others who are looking for the same opportunity," says Meyers, while explaining his active involvement in rehabilitation programs for Veterans.

The first day of the event concluded with a ceremony that included keynote speaker Santa Clara Superior Court Judge Stephen Manley, who oversees the only veterans' court in Northern California. (See related story on page

and the HVRP band, an all-veteran team of musicians there to entertain their fellow veterans.

"The Stand Down was a truly amazing experience," said social worker and VA volunteer Karen Chwick. "All of the veterans that I met with were so appreciative. For me, it was an extraordinary experience, particularly since it was held during the Jewish holidays.

One of the major components of Judaism is "Tikum Olam," which means Repairing the World. So for me this was an incredible way to spend this Jewish holiday. I am proud to have had the opportunity to participate in this event and thank all our staff for their exceptional dedication to veterans." ▲

*My dream was
to work for the program
and help other people
who were like me.*

—Sonia Smith, Veteran Volunteer



▲ A happy Veteran that received care during the Stand Down.

VA Honors Eye Researchers with OLIN TEAGUE AWARD



Two researchers from the VA Palo Alto Health Care System (VAPAHCS) were recently recognized for their research in vision issues that led to improved eye and vision injury examination techniques for Veterans.

Dr. Gregory Goodrich, research psychologist, and Dr. Glenn Cockerham, chief of ophthalmology, received the 2009 Olin Teague Award, a national award that recognizes contributions in an area critical to the rehabilitation and improvement in the quality of life of war-injured Veterans.

The doctors' research began in 2004 when they noticed that service members who were exposed to combat blasts and who sustained traumatic brain injury often had visual disorders and eye injuries that sometimes went undiagnosed.

Their research has wider implications for Americans who experience a traumatic

brain injury each year whether from stroke, motor vehicle accidents, falls, assaults, or other causes.

"The impact of their research has extended well beyond the VA family to clinicians throughout the country," VA Chief of Staff John Gingrich said at the awards ceremony. "The result is that Veterans and non-Veterans alike, whose injuries would have gone unnoticed and untreated just a few years ago, can now receive the care they need to keep their sight."

The award is named in honor of the late Olin E. Teague, an Army war hero and Texas congressman of 32 years, who spent



▲ Scott Johnson, Blind Rehab Specialist, working on orientation and mobility training with a Veteran

◀ Director Lisa Freeman and Drs. Cockerham and Goodrich (on right and far right) receive the Olin Teague Award from VA Chief of Staff John Gingrich, at left, and Olin Teague's daughter Ms. Jill Cochran at the Cannon House Office Building.

18 years chairing the House Veterans Affairs Committee.

VAPAHCS Director Lisa Freeman remarked, "Not only has their research led to national changes in the way VA conducts eye examinations, most importantly, they are drastically improving the vision and lives of many of our men and women who in the past had been overlooked."

Both Drs. Cockerham and Goodrich are Veterans, Air Force and Navy respectively.

"Not resting on their illustrious past accomplishments, Drs. Cockerham and Goodrich, along with their co-workers, continue to make strides to ensure that research is quickly and effectively integrated into diagnosing and treating patients with vision issues—patients whose vision problems just a few years ago would have gone unnoticed and untreated. They make us all proud to be part of the VA," said Freeman. ▲



John Kingston, Blind Rehab Specialist (left), guiding a Veteran using Neuro Vision Technology (NVT) to help improve Veteran's visual efficiency.

>

ON THE COVER

Dr. Gregory Goodrich, Dr. Glenn Cockerham and USMC Veteran and research participant Jason Poole.

DEPRESSION and BIPOLAR SUPPORT ALLIANCE

Recognize VAPAHCS Doctor's Research



CONGRATULATIONS to VAPAHCS psychiatrist Dr. Trisha Suppes, director of the Bipolar Disorder Research Program (part of VAPAHCS' War Related Injury and Illness Study Center), who received the 2008 Gerald L. Klerman Senior Investigator Award honoring her longstanding contributions to research that improved

the lives of people with mood disorders. The award is the highest honor given by the Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance (DBSA). It recognizes contributions to the understanding of the causes, diagnosis, and treatment of depressive and bipolar illnesses.

Bipolar disorder, also known as manic-depressive illness, is a mood disorder characterized by significant swings between mania and depression, as well as changes in sleep patterns, energy, activity, attention and impulsivity. The exact cause of bipolar disorder is unknown, but is believed to be biological; episodes can also be triggered by stressful events. The average time from symptom onset to correct diagnosis/treatment can take as long as 8-9 years.

According to DBSA, psychotherapy or "talk therapy" is an important part of treatment for many people. A good therapist can help modify behavioral or emotional patterns that contribute to the illness. People with bipolar disorder and/or chronic depression usually benefit from a combination of medication and talk therapy. Though medication does not guarantee a complete solution, the right medication can improve a person's ability to cope with life's problems and restore sense of judgment.

More than a Mood Swing – DBSA describes bipolar disorder as a treatable medical illness marked by extreme changes in mood, thought, energy and behavior. It is also known as manic depression because a person's mood can alternate between mania and depression. This change in mood (or "mood swing") can last from hours to months. "Mania" is an abnormally elevated mood state characterized by such symptoms as inappropriate elation, increased irritability, severe insomnia, grandiose notions, increased speed and/or volume of speech, disconnected and racing thoughts, increased sexual desire, markedly increased energy and activity level, poor judgment, and inappropriate social behavior.

Highs and Lows – Like depression, other illnesses and/or medical conditions, bipolar disorder can also impact spouses, family members, friends and coworkers. It usually appears in late adolescence (often as depression during teen years), although it can start in early childhood or as late as the 40s and 50s. An equal number of men and women develop this illness, and it is found among all ages, ethnic groups and social classes. The illness may run in families.

Some Symptoms and Observed Behavior include:

- ▲ Increased physical and mental activity and energy
- ▲ Heightened mood, exaggerated
- ▲ Optimism and self-confidence
- ▲ Excessive irritability, aggressive behavior
- ▲ Decreased need for sleep without experiencing fatigue
- ▲ Grandiose delusions, inflated sense of self-importance
- ▲ Racing speech, racing thoughts, flight of ideas
- ▲ Impulsiveness, poor judgment, distractibility
- ▲ Reckless behavior (e.g. spending sprees, rash business decisions, erratic driving and sexual indiscretions)
- ▲ In the most severe cases, delusions and hallucinations

Research Opportunity

Bipolar disorder including bipolar depression, bipolar mania and bipolar disorder that co-occurs with anxiety or panic symptoms

At this time there are two active studies recruiting participants. The studies and research focus on all areas of bipolar disorder including bipolar depression, bipolar mania.

VAPAHCS staff would be happy to schedule an initial screening and evaluation appointment for potential study participation. If you are interested, please contact us at:

(650) 849-0161 PHONE

BipolarDisorders@va.gov EMAIL

<http://bipolarresearch.stanford.edu/>

Vets Courts Serve Veterans Not Just the Criminal System

The VAPAHCS partnered with the Santa Clara County court system to create a “Veteran’s court,” an innovative alternative to the traditional criminal justice system. Initiated and presided over by Superior Court Judge Stephen

on the Veterans’ court docket. Since then, more than 60 Veterans have been referred to the court.

Judge Manley recently began inviting Veterans to serve as mentors to the defendants in his court. Speaking to a group of Veterans about the importance of the mentorship component of his program, Judge Manley explained, “If you have someone who has been through what they are going through, it’s much more powerful and meaningful. You can motivate them to turn their lives around; you can guide them through the VA system.” ▲



◀ Superior Court Judge Stephen Manley talks to graduates of VA’s homeless rehabilitation programs at Menlo Park about his new Veterans’ court. He asked for volunteers from the group to serve as mentors for those currently going through the justice system.

Manley, the court is designed to assist Veterans in obtaining services to address the underlying problems that have brought them into the criminal justice system.

Substance abuse and mental health issues often lead to the arrest and incarceration of Veterans, and Judge Manley discovered that Veterans in his courtroom were often unaware of the services available to them through VA. By bringing VA staff into the courtroom, defendants are able to quickly access VA resources, and Judge Manley is able to monitor their progress as they receive VA services.

“Our Veterans’ court is a lot like an ER—we have immediate action, Veterans don’t have to wait,” said Judge Manley. “We connect them to the VA or community resources, instead of jail or prison. Everyone wins.”

Modeled after the nation’s original Veterans’ court in Buffalo, N.Y., Judge Manley’s court was the third such court in the country to use this unique collaboration between the VA and the court system. When Judge Manley’s court opened its doors in November 2008, there were 22 Veterans



Thanks to the work of countless volunteers, the VAPAHCS Rose Garden has been a source of comfort, tranquility and encouragement for many Veterans, families and staff. It is also a place for new beginnings: Congratulations to Shane Scherer, U.S. Army, and Jacqueline Bennett on their recent engagement. Shane proposed to Jacqueline in the gazebo of the rose garden, a place that has become a retreat for the couple during Shane’s rehabilitation at VAPAHCS.

Congratulations!

epicenter

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ALTO HEALTH CARE SYSTEM

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We welcome any comments,
suggestions or story ideas
you may have; please contact
Patricia Matthews (00P)
at 650-849-1222 or via email at
patricia.matthews1@va.gov

Editor
Patricia Teran-Matthews

Contributors
Kerri Childress
VOLUNTEER Thomas Dehaan
VAPAHCS DIRECTOR Lisa Freeman
Robert Homer

Photographer
Curt Campbell

Design & Layout
Rodney E. Boyce
SQUARE PEG DESIGN



3801 Miranda Avenue

Palo Alto, CA 94304

650-493-5000

www.palo-alto.med.va.gov

Service Awards

July 2009

25 years

Mei-Kuen Cheng	Nursing/Medical/Surgical
Rochelle Gray	Pharmacy
Rose Hurlbert	Nursing/Ambulatory Care
Matilde Nino-Murcia	Radiology
Kamala Shankar	Physical Med. & Rehab.

30 years

Nicolasa Dumaop	Nursing/Ambulatory Care
Lunester Harley	Nursing/Ambulatory Care
Joanne Krumberger	Director's Office
Karen Nesbitt	Nursing/Rehabilitation
David Stowell	Nursing/Ambulatory Care

35 years

Mary Cox	Path. & Laboratory Med.
Conniesue Redman	Nursing/Ambulatory Care

August 2009

25 years

Sharleen Koide	Path. & laboratory Med.
Linda Lafond-Cohn	Director's Office
Janet Lamb	Nursing/Mental Health
Timothy Meyer	Medical
Laura Orozco	Research
Macleon Warren	Envmtl. Management
Mark Zemke	Chief of Staff

30 years

Karen Brown	Nursing/Long Term Care
Joseph Cebula	Business Office
Gloria Mouton	Nursing/Long Term Care
Alice Nichols	Nursing/Mental Health
John Wasson	Engineering
Essie Wilson	Nursing/Long Term Care

35 years

Alfred Henderson	Engineering
Nona Lanter	Psychology

40 years

Cesar Belena	Engineering
Irene Bourbeau	Fiscal

September 2009

25 years

Karen Boatright	Nursing/Long Term Care
Kelly Conway	Nursing/ Mental Health
Rita Cummings	Prosthetics & Sensory Aids
Susan Day	Physical Med. & Rehab.
Ellen Feeney	Nursing/ Medical/ Surgical
Laura Markman	Director's Office
Elizabeth Moore	GRECC
Robert Randall	Nursing/ Mental Health
Jay Regan	Engineering
Rebecca Valadez	Anesthesiology
Sharon Viken	Nursing/Ambulatory Care

30 years

Rogernee Bussey	Business Office
Phyllis McGrath	Surgical
Timothy Reardon	Nursing/Mental Health

35 years

Diana Hygelund	Nursing/Medical/Surgical
Susan Lovaasen	Surgical
Phillip Velez	Engineering

Retirees congratulations!

June 2009

Shayesteh Ahmed	Nursing	yrs	21
Mary Ann Centanni	A&MMS		34
Minerva Soleta	Nursing		5

July 2009

Milagros Damatan	Nutrition & Food	yrs	27
Richard Geurts	Nursing		33
Curtis Keswick	Surgical		33
Fernando Palumpon	Medical		32
Nelson Salud	Prosthetics		5

August 2009

Albert Chen	Medical	yrs	36
Marsha Davis	Chaplain		23
Tomasa Dagdagan	Nursing		10
Susan Hyder	Director's Office		17
Julie Im	Nursing		10

you make a difference

AT A TIME when there seems to be a constant onslaught of bad news, I am pleased to send a letter thanking you for the extraordinary kindness that was extended to one of



my constituents who visited your facility in Livermore. The WWII veteran patient was in his mid-80s, and he was suffering from severe hearing loss and was very apprehensive about the visit.

He recently visited your Audiology/Speech pathology department and was greeted there by **Lisa Gouveia**. It

was related to me that he was treated as though he were part of the family. Ms. Gouveia was extremely patient and treated him with great kindness and respect. When there were follow up issues, she personally made sure he was able to sit with Evelyn Sitnik in the Patient Service Assistant Business Office. I am pleased to say that the care and concern that he experienced in audiology was reflected equally by Ms. Sitnik.

The individuals who served their country in WWII are now reaching an advanced age. It is nice to know that the people who work within Veterans Affairs care so much about the patients with whom they work.

—**Tom Berryhill, Assemblyman, District 25**

I WOULD LIKE TO take this opportunity to thank the Veterans Administration for helping me work through my heart attack, and a special thanks to **Evelyn Shinoda**, my dietician because, I believe, without her prompt actions, I wouldn't be here.

We were talking about a weight loss program. During that interview, she asked me how I was feeling. I told her that every now and then I get chest pain, and I didn't know what would be the cause. After further conversation, she escorted me down to the E.R. To make a long story short, I now have two stents in my veins. What I thought was nothing, she felt could become a major problem and she was right.

I have nothing but praise for everyone at the VA who helped me through my heart attack. I've been in numerous hospitals for other operations, and once again, the VA is far superior regarding patient and staff relationships. Once again, I would like to thanks everyone who participated in my care at the VA. —**A Veteran**

TO Sandy MacDonald, Head Nurse, and all the nursing staff at Unit F. Spinal Cord Unit. I need to tell you that my appreciation for any nurses and particularly for the private duty nurses has increased tenfold since my husband was discharged last May.

I'm sure you remember my husband because he did provide many incidents of excitement after the nearly 100 days at the VA and 35 days at Valley Med before that. The wrestling off the halo – twice! And yes, he was delirious when he engaged in these struggles. There were many falls but so far no broken bones or injuries.

We are extremely fortunate to have found a wonderful attendant, **Ben Robert**, a nursing student who comes daily, does at least one hour and sometimes more physical therapy and takes my husband for walks. He is making amazing progress.

There is no doubt in my mind that he would not be able to care for himself near as well as he does, nor would I be able to cope, were it not for the amazing care and cheerful encouragement you all give him and me. I have unbounded admiration for you and your staff and sing your praises continuously to everyone I meet, and I cannot thank you enough. —**A Veterans Wife**

I WOULD LIKE TO express in a humble manner the professionalism and personal care **Dr. Rukhsana A. Khan** has displayed in managing my care in a manner which I feel



has prolonged and improved my quality of life for the past several years. Dr. Khan not only has been a most effective physician, but she has also provided me with constant personal advise in how to deal the various stress factors I face on a day-to-day basis.

I know that oftentimes we fail to recognize individuals who excel in their profession and will go that extra mile to insure that a service provided results in a positive improvement in the life of the recipient. Dr. Khan fits and exceeds this criteria. I feel very fortunate to have her as my doctor and can sincerely state that I have never a met a physician who displays such a caring professional attitude towards her patients as Dr. Khan.

It has been brought to my attention that Dr. Khan has been transferred to the VA Clinic in San Jose from the Livermore Division. I know she will continue the high standards she has set for herself in her new position at the VA, San Jose OPC. —**A Veteran**

www.palo-alto.med.va.gov